

Filed for intro on 02/07/2001

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 51  
By Mumpower

A RESOLUTION to congratulate Bob Helton upon his induction  
into the Tennessee Tennis Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those citizens who, through their natural talents and unflagging commitment to excellence, bring honor to the state of Tennessee and serve as fine examples of the quality of this state's populace; and

WHEREAS, Bob Helton is one such noteworthy citizen who has attained the highest level of athletic success; on January 26, 2001, the Tennessee Tennis Hall of Fame recognized his substantial accomplishments by inducting him as a member of the Hall; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong resident of Bristol, Mr. Helton displayed his considerable talents at Tennessee High School before graduating in 1955; amazingly, he never lifted a tennis racket until he was seventeen years old; and

WHEREAS, Bob Helton's athletic talent enabled him to have tremendous success first on the basketball court; after starring at Tennessee High, he redshirted for one season at the University of Tennessee before transferring to King College; and

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WHEREAS, a standout guard on King's basketball squad, Mr. Helton first seriously competed in what would become his signature sport when basketball coach Dick Bowers took the reigns of King's tennis team and convinced Helton to utilize his talents on the tennis court; tutored by Bristol tennis legends Karl Smith, Otis Hurt, Alton Good, and the late G. B. Pierce, Helton graduated from King College in 1960 having lost just two singles matches in his final two years of intercollegiate competition; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his remarkable accomplishments at the school, King College inducted Bob Helton into their Hall of Fame in 1986; and

WHEREAS, beginning his career as a teacher, basketball coach, and football coach at Chilhowie High School, Helton remained active as a basketball player in the early 1960s; as a member of a semipro team, the Pepsi-Cola All-Stars, Helton competed against NBA legends such as "Hot Rod" Hundley, Wayne Embrey, Elgin Baylor, and Jerry West; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Helton became a part-time tennis-teaching professional in 1963; his high school teaching career ended when he returned to school at East Tennessee State University to pursue a master's degree; and

WHEREAS, displaying a knack for helping young players maximize their talents, Bob Helton became a full-time tennis instructor in 1975, when he and John Bachman built what is now the Bristol Racquet Club; Helton became sole owner of the facility in 1985 before selling the business in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Helton's accomplishments as a tennis instructor are of such magnitude that they alone would merit membership in the Hall of Fame; in his more than three decades as an instructor, Mr. Helton has become known across the South for his skill in instruction; and

WHEREAS, Margie Brown Stanley, considered by most to be the top female tennis player in East Tennessee history, thrived under the tutelage of Mr. Helton; in an era when a defensive strategy was the norm for young, female players, Bob Helton turned the talented young lady into an aggressive, devastating serve-and-volley player; and

WHEREAS, Margie became the top-ranked player in the South in 16-under and 18-under girls' singles; she followed an outstanding high school career, which included two TSSAA state titles, by becoming the top player at the University of North Carolina in only her freshman year; and

WHEREAS, Jim Thompson, now the men's tennis coach at Virginia Tech University, gives much credit to Bob Helton for the many hours of instruction that enabled Thompson to become the best junior boys player ever produced by southwest Virginia; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his coaching achievements, Mr. Helton has compiled an astounding record of accomplishment as a tennis competitor; in a 43-year career, he has triumphed in more than 350 USTA-sanctioned singles and doubles tournaments and accumulated twenty-three Southern Sectional titles; and

WHEREAS, exceptionally well-conditioned physically, Bob Helton continues to make his presence felt as a force on the national tennis scene; as he moves into the 65-over division next year, those knowledgeable about American tennis expect Mr. Helton to be a favorite to bring home to Tennessee some "gold balls" as USTA national champion; and

WHEREAS, possessing estimable accomplishments in all of his undertakings, Mr. Helton provides an excellent example of the tremendous success that can be achieved by those Tennesseans who possess the determination, drive, and dedication to take full advantage of their innate talents; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby commend and honor Bob Helton for his enshrinement in the Tennessee Tennis Hall of Fame in recognition of his substantial legacy as a competitor and instructor in the tennis community of Tennessee, offer our thanks for the honor which he has brought to this state, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.